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ABSTRACT

The American Textbook Council identified the nation's leading social studies textbooks based on estimated volume of sales and on adoptions in California, Indiana, North Carolina, Florida, and New York. Three multi-volume elementary-level programs and about a dozen secondary-level history textbooks command the market. The history textbooks at the new century exhibit supercharged graphics and reduced text, and the diversity movement realized in these textbooks is often big, pervasive, and serious in its intention "to alter school history." Special evaluations were conducted in December 1998 and July 1999 at the University of California at Santa Barbara Learning Resources Display Center. The Council commissioned reviews by teachers, textbook experts, and historians. The three main conclusions of this study of leading elementary- and secondary-level history textbooks are that currently: (1) gutted textbooks and the passing of close reading as a central learning activity pose profound challenges to literacy and habits of thought; (2) editorial confusion reigns in the subject of history; (3) content is thinner and thinner and is increasingly deformed by identity politics and group pieties; and (4) publishers should be producing cheaper books that are more text-centered, simpler in design, and more honest in content. (Includes 18 footnotes and a checklist for reviewing textbooks.) (BT)

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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AT THE NEW CENTURY

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Gilbert T. Sewall

A Report of the
American Textbook Council

2000

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1

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The American Textbook Council was established in 1988 as an independent national research organization to review social studies textbooks and advance the quality of instructional materials in history. The Council endorses the production of textbooks that embody vivid narrative style, stress significant people and events, and promote better understanding of all cultures, including our own, on the principle that improved textbooks will advance the curriculum, stimulate student learning, and encourage educational achievement for children of all backgrounds. The Council acts as a clearinghouse for information about social studies textbooks and educational publishing in general. It has published numerous history textbook reviews and other curriculum studies. Consulted by educators and policymakers at all levels, it provides detailed information and textbook reviews for individuals and groups interested in improving educational materials.

History Textbooks at the New Century

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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AT THE NEW CENTURY

By Gilbert T. Sewall

The three main conclusions of this study of leading elementary- and secondary-level history textbooks are that today: (1) Gutted textbooks and the passing of close reading as a central learning activity pose profound challenges to literacy and habits of thought. (2) Editorial confusion reigns in the subject of history. Content is thinner and thinner, and what there is, increasingly deformed by identity politics and group pieties. (3) Publishers should be producing cheaper books that are more text-centered, simpler in design, and more honest in content.

A REPORT OF THE AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Preface 1

1. Why History Textbooks Are Important 3

2. A Challenge to Literacy 5

3. The Business of Social Studies 7

4. Findings: New History Textbooks 12

5. Conclusions 34

Reviewing Textbooks: A Checklist 39

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS CITED

Textbooks may appear in several versions, including in one- and two-volume sets and in special content formations, e.g., the California or Texas version, based on a national edition. Successful textbooks are reissued with new copyrights almost annually. Revised editions occur two or five years after the first edition. Unless otherwise noted, the volumes used in this study were submitted to the Florida and California adoptions in 1998 and 1999 or have year 2000 copyrights. These leading textbooks are identified by publisher, first author, and abridged title.

HM	Houghton Mifflin/McDougal Littell
HB	Harcourt Brace/Holt, Rinehart and Winston
M	McGraw-Hill/Glencoe
O	Oxford University Press
P	Pearson/Prentice Hall
W	Tribune/West

Elementary Social Studies

HM	Social Studies [California curriculum series]
HB	Social Studies
M	Adventures in Time and Place

Secondary United States History

Eleventh Grade [copyrights since 1994]:

HB	Boyer	The American Nation [1994 and 2000 editions]
P	Boorstin	A History of the United States
P	Cayton	Pathways to the Present
HM	Danzer	The Americans
W	Downey	In the Course of Human Events
M	Nash	American Odyssey

Eighth Grade [copyrights since 1994]:

M	Appleby	American Journey [California edition]
P	Davidson	The American Nation [1994, 1998 and 2000 editions]
O	Hakim	History of US
HM	Mason	America's Past and Promise [not submitted to California]
HB	Stuckey	Call to Freedom
P	Viola	Why We Remember

Eighth and Eleventh Grade [copyrights before 1994]:

HM	DiBacco	History of the United States
M	Drewry	America Is
HB	Garraty	The Story of America

Secondary World History

HM	Nash	To See a World
P	Ellis	Connections to Today
M	Farah	The Human Experience

Preface

THE TIME IS RIPE TO INSPECT elementary- and secondary-level history textbooks, individually and as a genre. A new generation of history textbooks has arrived on the market with distinctive qualities that differ from textbooks published thirty or even ten years ago. Textbooks that are "traditional" in content and design are being backlisted or are going out of print. Others have had radical makeovers. Four key states -- California, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas -- have completed adoptions of elementary or high school textbooks in United States and World History since 1997.

The important California history textbook adoption ended in March 1999. The California state board of education approved four major eighth-grade books and three elementary series, essentially the same books adopted by Florida and North Carolina. It did not hold publishers to a strict standard of quality or to the state history framework, as it tried to do in 1990. The state of Texas -- with almost 300,000 students per grade -- had been scheduled to adopt new secondary-level United States history textbooks. At the end of 1997 it postponed the action for four years because of differences between the state's rewritten standards and what textbooks were available on the market. The delay of the nation's most high-profile state textbook review process threw publishers into confusion.

Nonetheless, because of Texas, educational publishers had developed new eighth- and eleventh-grade books that they began to market nationally in 1998. In the next two years Texas will complete a delayed and long awaited adoption of high school-level United States history textbooks. The history textbooks that California adopted in 1999 provide the mass-market instructional materials that will be sold to schools nationally for the next five years. The findings, observations, and recommendations below are based on the review of textbooks published since 1997, concentrating on United States history textbooks commonly used in the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades, notably such textbooks adopted by California in March 1999.

This new generation of history textbooks should be of interest and concern to all Americans. The ways that history textbooks affect how students see themselves, their nation, and the world cannot be quantified. But their civic impact is uncontested. American history textbooks are the official portraits of our country's past that are purchased by local and state governments and that are assigned to students with the foreknowledge that these students will someday participate in public affairs. How much these students know and what they think about their nation and world will indelibly affect civic character. The history textbooks that succeed nationally during the next few years will have an influence on social studies beyond the textbook cycle itself. They will reflect how the United States intends to represent itself and its ideals to the youth of the early twenty-first century. They will be important indicators of "who we are" and "what we are" as a nation and people after a decade of exposure to multiculturalism.

The Council has surveyed the social studies textbook landscape for more than a decade, trying to be fair in weighing and assessing the industry's output as a whole, tracking the course of three textbook "generations," the first of these published between 1983 and 1985 and the last since 1994. Like other critics, it has expressed a sense of alarm about long-term trends in textbook design and content.

The history textbooks at the new century not only exhibit supercharged graphics and reduced text. As to content, the diversity movement realized in these textbooks is often big, pervasive, and serious in its intention to alter school history, and when taken to extremes, it has the potential to injure and demoralize the body public. The effort to bring minorities, women and people of color into the story of America has dominated social studies content and curriculum reform for two decades. School-level United States history today is likely to be portrayed as an unfinished journey; one with many historical injustices heaped on minorities, women, and immigrants; a polity, society, and culture that should be moving toward a more particularized and fully egalitarian state; and include lessons mourning for the past's many victims.

There are many unsatisfactory history textbooks on the market, more of them than in the past. But sound history textbooks do exist. And explaining to teachers, education officials, and all interested parties what makes history textbooks good or bad is the raison d'être of this guide. The American Textbook Council wants to help any individual or committee that is in the process of selecting a history or social studies textbook make the best possible choice, free of publishers' sales pressure. The standards and recommendations are divorced from any commercial consideration or constituent interest. The most frequent request received by the Council is to name the "best" textbook in United States or World history. This is not a request that it can or wants to fulfill. When teachers and curriculum supervisors decide to purchase one or another textbook, many variables come into play: teaching styles, readability and general student reading levels, and views about history and the social studies. The all-important element of teacher choice and preference enters into account.

Still, distinctions can be made. The American Textbook Council identified the nation's leading social studies textbooks based on estimated volume of sales and on adoptions in California, Indiana, North Carolina, Florida, and New York. Three multi-volume elementary-level programs and about a dozen secondary-level history textbooks command the market. The 1994 Council booklet, *History Textbooks: A Standard and Guide*, reviewed some of these textbooks, and others were cited in the Council's 1998 preliminary report, "A New Generation of History Textbooks." *History Textbooks at the New Century* concentrates on the United States history textbooks adopted by California in 1999 but considers other major textbooks that have appeared in classrooms around the country since 1994.

Special evaluations were conducted in December 1998 and July 1999 at the University of California at Santa Barbara Learning Resources Display Center. The Council commissioned reviews by teachers, textbook experts, and historians. I am especially grateful to Walter A. McDougall, Paul Gagnon, Robert Hagopian, and Peter Cannon for their contributions and evaluations. I am indebted to Roger W. Smith for his observations on textbooks and the diversity movement. I thank teachers in California, Delaware, Indiana, and Massachusetts who commented on social studies textbooks that they are using or have inspected. Any claims I have made or conclusions I have drawn as principal investigator are my own. I thank the John M. Olin Foundation and Bodman Foundation for their generous support of this study. As always, I thank Stapley W. Emberling for her assistance with this project from beginning to completion.

1. Why History Textbooks Are Important

American students typically encounter the subject of history in fourth or fifth grade. Between the eighth and twelfth grade, an estimated 85 percent take one or two years of United States history. Perhaps half take a course in World history or world events. Such a course may or may not emphasize Western civilization and may or may not be "historical" in approach. Many students will take an American government or geography course. Others may take a course in economics, consumer education, psychology, or another social studies elective.

Textbooks are the draft horse of this social studies curriculum. They are familiar, efficient, portable, and relatively cheap. In many or most classrooms they are the sole source of information about the subject for teachers and students alike. They provide an organized sequence of ideas and information. Textbooks structure teaching and learning. Textbooks are time savers, providing a prepackaged "delivery system" that helps conserve teachers' time and energy. For all the tech talk in schools today, textbooks are likely to remain classroom staples for years to come. The Association of American Publishers concedes that CD-ROM formats have disappointing sales. A standard student textbook and teacher's annotated edition (TAE) remain predominantly the sources of most classroom teaching and learning.

Teachers who are unknowledgable about history tend to be overly respectful of these instructional materials. They often assume (incorrectly) that learned researchers carefully labor to produce canonical tomes. Almost any organized, informed, and enthusiastic teacher can overcome a deficient textbook. But as textbook deficiencies grow more universal, teachers have less choice and must adjust to the instructional materials they are given to use.

Most textbook purchasers want instructional programs delivered to them whole. They do not want to take the time -- or feel that they do not have the expertise -- to build a course of study and history program from scratch. Textbooks are constructed and written for teachers who face daily demands and responsibilities not conducive to original class planning. Their job may include signing vaccination certificates and coaching athletic teams. "A history textbook should provide rich, detailed, sustained, and interwoven narrative, with the teacher building, selecting, and refining its fare in the form of activities, displays, composition, direct instruction, and links," explains Robert Hagopian, an eighth grade social studies teacher in California.

But this is an ideal, not a rule. The textbook gives all teachers some security and a content baseline. Besides providing wide factual information that few teachers possess, it organizes material into digestible units around topics that give some logic and direction to the lesson. What is called the "editorial apparatus" includes questions and exercises from which classroom activities derive. The standard history textbook creates sequentially organized episodes divided into lessons. In history courses, it imposes order on the past.

A standard textbook has a life span of five to ten years. States and localities generally purchase their textbooks subject by subject, rotationally, year by year. At the elementary level, teachers turn to social studies on average two hours a week, typically pulling a volume from a multi-grade "program" off a classroom shelf. Teachers rely on the TAE to guide the lesson of the day and link one lesson to another. They expect back-up from "ancillaries," which are classroom helpers: workbooks, questions and test items, vocabulary words, key concept lists, and activity suggestions. At the secondary level, history and social studies classes use a single-volume text, also supplemented by a teacher's annotated edition.

In 1990 Houghton Mifflin introduced a nine-volume set of social studies textbooks keyed to California's 1987 history-social science curriculum framework for grades kindergarten through eight, a series that was adopted in the state after much controversy. The Houghton Mifflin program was a pacesetter, introducing fresh design and layout, stripping away text, and observing multicultural conventions. The series has been widely imitated. During the last ten years its eye-catching appeal has come to seem a mixed blessing. The Houghton Mifflin books -- and the whole new generation of elementary social studies textbooks that the series has influenced -- are hard to read and impossible to outline, many teachers complain. Bright graphics and seductive color overwhelm the text and confuse the page.

Too many text lines, too much broken format, too profuse illustrations. The text simply gets lost. The seven-volume McGraw-Hill program, *Adventures in Time and Place*, dominant in elementary-level social studies across the nation for more than a decade, exhibits the same design minuses and in content is inferior to the Houghton Mifflin series used in California. *Adventures in Time and Place* is a makeover of the hugely successful Macmillan program, rethought, redesigned, and renamed the McGraw-Hill series for the 1997 Texas elementary-level social studies adoption, leaning far into multiculturalism and identity politics. Authored by James A. Banks and Walter C. Parker of the University of Washington, assisted by other social studies educators who endorse a multicultural superstructure in the social studies, this kindergarten through seventh grade series includes *A New Nation*, a history of the United States for fifth graders.

2. A Challenge to Literacy

Interpretive controversies and the diversity movement rocked classroom history in the 1990s. But these clashes only re-enforced content changes in history textbooks that had begun twenty years earlier. The most basic change in elementary and secondary-level history textbooks during the 1990s was the loss of text. History textbooks today reflect editorial indifference to style and explosition. Reading specialists, historians, and educators agree that textbooks and other instructional materials discourage close reading for information and that lost text contributes to student confusion and lack of interest.

For more than a decade, scholars and critics have repeatedly voiced complaints about poor writing in history textbooks, a fault compounded by new design conventions that change their look and radically shrink the amount of text inside them.[1] Compressing complex and significant topics into a few sentences makes history textbooks hard to understand. Why some topics are included and others excluded remains unclear. Details that might fix an event in memory are frequently omitted. Textbooks are vague about things that are interesting and specific about events and people that no one needs to remember. Too many topics are covered superficially. Textbooks have trouble building bridges from one subject to another. Language is often choppy, stilted, and impersonal. It is a difficult style to read, understand, or remember. The disappearance of core text and ongoing simplification of textbook language present fundamental challenges to general learning, the informed mind, and the liberal imagination.

Thanks to advances in printing, the new generation of history textbooks features lavish photography and eye-catching graphics as never before. On this point, all reviewers seem to agree. The colorful, highly pictorial design is brilliant to behold. Of Glencoe's *American Journey*, a successful American history textbook adopted by California in 1999 and destined for middle and

[1] The text can be fragmented to a degree that children and young readers cannot follow narrative development. They have trouble building bridges from one subject to another. The vocabulary is constrained by many rules and formulas. It is a difficult style to read, understand, and remember. A 1988 study of four elementary social studies programs by Isabel L. Beck et al. earned "a strong indictment of those materials" on several grounds of style and story, concluding that "unclear content goals, assumed background knowledge, inadequate explanations, and . . . sloppy presentations. . . . Even when the general topic of the content seemed to imply a goal, the concepts to support the goal were not clearly established. . . . [M]ajor concepts and events often go unexplained. Inadequate explanations are often rooted in the background knowledge issue. That is, many explanations begin at the wrong place, assuming understanding of ideas that would allow learners to draw connections needed for a coherent representation of a topic. Explanations require more than statements of facts and events; information that connects facts, events, and ideas and clarifies their role in a phenomenon is needed to bring about understanding. Numerous examples were found of bad writing, poor organization, and muddled thinking. The kinds of problems that fall into this category are not editorial errors; their cause is not as simple as an omitted word or transposed sentences. Rather, they show evidence of poorly developed ideas."

high school classrooms around the country, historian Walter A. McDougall of the University of Pennsylvania has commented: "Every page includes some sort of illustration, inset, map, timeline, sidebar or study aid. The illustrations are evocative, the maps gorgeous, and the timelines and sidebars informative. But the fact remains that it is extremely difficult to follow the main narrative: the reader must consciously block out the visual aids in order to follow the text."

American Journey is not alone among history textbooks at the new century. It is simply the most ambitious recent entry into big-time secondary-level United States history, the commercial epicenter of social studies publishing. In order to increase sales, *American Journey*, like other textbooks developed in recent years, tries to straddle two grade-level markets: middle schools and high schools. Like its competitors, it is a slickly produced "product" that provides between its covers Something For Everybody. *American Journey*, for example, includes a "Hands-On Lab Activity" Taffy Pull for students that includes a recipe and a Believe It Or Not! box noting that the average American eats 18 pounds of candy annually, most of it chocolate.

Learning activities are intended to help students retain information and connect with the subject. But they often impede the train of ideas and thought. In elementary school series, in the worst cases, the text is cut and fragmented to such a degree that children cannot possibly process the subject, let alone fathom its meaning or significance. Without episodic narrative and concrete examples, textbook history remains remote and meaningless to students and teachers alike. Its study is a waste of precious classroom time and opportunity. The absence of good stories, bold narrative, and suspenseful tales may dampen student enthusiasm for the subject from the very beginning. Startling or bizarre details -- factoids -- may try to elicit student surprise and attention, but these are poor substitutes for narrative that stimulates the imagination and explains the workings of the world in engaging and honest words.

Publishers are adjusting to short attention spans and non-readers. They are also pushing a doubtful theory of learning. "Text is a slow medium of gaining information; a picture is a very quick way," said John Sargent, the past president of DK (Dorling Kindersley), the revolutionary designer of children's books. "By spending more time with the picture and less with the text, which we place right next to the image, kids absorb a lot more information quickly."[2] Phrases such as "text-heavy," "information-loaded," "fact-based," and "non-visual" have been negatives among mass-market educational publishers for a number of years. Typeface is larger and looser than in the recent past, resulting in many fewer words and much more white space.

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[2] Sally Lodge, "Giving Kid's Reference A Fresh Look," *Publishers Weekly*, April 26, 1996.

Editors and writers repeatedly tamper with content in order to find the right set of subjects that textbook overseers think will appeal to the largest possible number of teacher-consumers. The text can be at once poorly written and partisan. Diminished subject and deformed content are not the only problems. Some reformers claim that electronic learning and computer-based instructional materials can solve the education crisis.[3] Technology and educational progress simply get confused.

Some new textbook ancillaries that the California state board of education approved in 1999 are simply anti-educational. The McGraw-Hill social studies series, for example, includes hundreds of expensively produced, unit-by-unit, grade-by-grade Mindjogger® videotapes, scripted as game shows, designed for the teacher willing to pop a tape into a television monitor for student "review," videotapes that are created to be given away to impressionable teachers who are looking for ways to stimulate learning in their classrooms. For some educators, technology is the key to educational progress, a panacea trumpeted by self-interested companies and their executives.

Foundation officers, presidents of learned societies, humanities professors, and editorialists voice concern about the future of language. "Reading and writing are not merely cosmetic skills, comparable to good manners. The European and English philosophical traditions have taught us that language and thought are inseparable," warned Vartan Gregorian in his 1998 annual president's report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. "Reading and writing are the essence of thinking." Invoking George Orwell's words, Gregorian worried that if "we begin to prefer the vague to the exact, we reduce the range of our consciousness. Eventually . . . we will not know, and then we will not care."[4]

3. The Business of Social Studies

In social studies publishing, selling and the production-design schedule drive the editorial process. Editors are on the road or at conventions marketing their high-cost products. Outside subcontractors ("packagers") take on the coordinating role, not unlike that of film producers. The people who are in charge of creating history textbooks rarely have much background in the field;

[3] In 1997 the Texas state school board chairman proposed replacing textbooks with laptop computers; Maine educators recently proposed a similar initiative for middle schools. See Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century*, Knopf, 1999. Postman considers the fallacies inherent in technology-based learning and their dangers to language and lucid thought. He notes that American students already have an oversupply of sources of information. "What is information and how much of it do people need? Obviously, information is not the same thing as knowledge, and it is certainly not anything close to what one might mean by wisdom," Postman concludes.
[4] Vartan Gregorian, "Libraries and Andrew Carnegie's Challenge," from Report of the President, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1998.

many of them are enthusiastic about making changes in history and design that trim the subject to celebrate identity, people of color, women and other once marginal groups. Nearly anonymous staff ("the team") in development houses coordinate the development of text, design, and ancillary materials on a rapid production schedule. The authorial hand is unclear. The hundreds of revisions and content rearrangements make it difficult for managing editors even to remember the changes, let alone maintain continuity throughout. Errors can and do creep into revisions, which are made in cycles of draft and redraft.

Reputable historians who oversee textbook development try to prevent inaccuracies and what they consider to be flawed interpretations by means of repeated readings and memoranda to editors. Unlike the college textbook market, in which authors write their own books and market shares for each textbook are relatively small, school authors who are advertised as such have minimal control over their product. But even this imperfect system of production seems to be lapsing. In order to cut costs, publishers are shrinking their editorial and production staffs, moving toward a writing-for-hire production system and abandoning the royalty-based author system that in the past helped give textbooks authorial voice. Multimedia packages being introduced to "electronic classrooms" have no author behind them at all, and some programs appearing on the market since 1997 are overtly author-free. The advertised authors of textbooks serve as editorial advisors while staff members or packagers actually assemble the program (of which the student edition is only a cornerstone). A handful of professional history textbook writers work on competing series and textbooks, published by different companies, apparently with no conflict of interest or loyalty. As with the stated authors of *American Journey*, Joyce Appleby, Alan Brinkley, and James M. McPherson, even eminent historians known for their elegant writing can be compromised by the school textbook creation process. Nonetheless, when publishers affix the names of historians and educators of consequence to the spines of textbooks, these "authors" bear final responsibility for their contents.

School publishing is lucrative and profitable, accounting for an estimated $3.4 billion in sales in 1999, about one-seventh of revenues of all commercial publishing. Part of the appeal is predictability. In addition, state money allocated for textbooks and instructional materials rose rapidly during the late 1990s, helping to assure publishers of increasing revenues and profit margins. California's per-pupil spending on elementary school textbooks, for example, jumped from $29 to $43 in 1998.[5]

[5] Doreen Carvajal, "Heady Days Return For Textbook Sales," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1998; Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, "More Dollars For Textbooks Draws Sellers," *Education Week*, September 30, 1998.

With successful textbooks, publishers have the opportunity to create high-margin revenue streams that can last for years. A successful mass-market volume or program can remain a big seller for decades. If a textbook captures a share of a national or global market, going into several editions and becoming a familiar classroom friend, it rings up huge net earnings over time. Publishers design social studies books to be sold in as many states and districts as possible. Field representatives, sales forces, market researchers, product managers, and editorial directors help determine the content of a social studies textbook. So do state frameworks, advocates for diverse groups and causes, and numerous focus groups that round off any sharpness or edge.

The entry barriers to educational publishing are formidable. States and many local districts require publishers to post performance bonds, provide many free samples, maintain textbook depositories, and field teachers' consultants. Aggressive sales forces often build tight relationships with district-level textbook purchasers that become habitual over time. Any company that plans to compete nationally in school publishing must be capital intensive and "full service," offering study guides, workbooks, and technology, along with discounts, premiums, and an array of teacher enticements. Spanish versions, margins, texts, binders, and answer keys may determine which books are adopted, and activity books in Cambodian, Hmong, Cantonese, and Vietnamese are welcomed, as publishers offer new kinds of teacher back-up for non-English instruction.

All who know educational publishing agree that ancillaries help sell a history textbook, even if they are consigned to the storage closet or are used up after a year or two. These add-ons make basic instructional materials more expensive because publishers must recoup what they give away. Local districts often make their selections based on promises of premiums and discounts, not on the content of the program. Cutting special deals has become the rule among publishers; larger districts expect ancillaries at a discount or gratis. Customers sometimes pit one educational publisher against another. "We'll take anything that's free," declared one Indiana teacher, speaking of ancillary appeal.

Multimedia have given rise to innumerable publishing initiatives and entrepreneurial ventures, as publishers see opportunities in media linkages between formerly independent knowledge and information operations. In educational publishing, *synergy* and *brand extension* moved from business concepts to market reality during the 1990s. An example is the licensing agreement cemented in 1999 by McGraw-Hill and the National Geographic Society across the social studies, a union that makes for a formidable combination in selling "product." The famous yellow rectangle logo -- expressly protected and trademarked -- now crowns the cover of the entire McGraw-Hill and Glencoe social studies lines, including *American Journey*.

Several historians who know school publishing conclude that *American Journey* is a masterpiece, what one calls "a stroke of genius," if looked at purely from a marketing point of view. Editorial relations between the National Geographic Society and the McGraw-Hill social studies empire remain opaque. The National Geographic Society's contribution to the contents is limited to a small amount of descriptive material and some sharply produced illustrations. The union gives the appearance of licensing one of the nation's most respected non-profit names to McGraw-Hill with revenue solely in mind. However venal this National Geographic Society arrangement with McGraw-Hill, it is dynamite at the box office. The head of a major district adoption committee in Indiana recently confided that the logo was the single most important indicator, in fact, the determining agent, when he chose Glencoe social studies products over the competition. McGraw-Hill's union with National Geographic Society is not unique. Prentice Hall now hails its ties to American Heritage. Harcourt Brace Social Studies has links with CNN and a new enterprise called Turner Le@rning.

Four states -- California, Texas, Florida, and North Carolina -- have uncontested market power on account of their size and state-level adoption practices. New social studies elementary series, United States history textbooks, and civics and geography texts tend to appear on the market incorporating special demands coming from California and Texas. Nineteen states hold adoptions to publish a prescribed list and make textbooks eligible for state funding. The balance of the states are "open territory." Defenders of state adoptions argue that state control helps ensure textbook quality. In open territory local school districts -- or schools -- select and purchase textbooks themselves, often backed by substantial state funding. The long-term trend, no doubt, is away from state-level adoptions and toward local choice. Experience in the 1990s showed that (1) teachers prefer to select their own instructional materials, (2) state adoption does not guarantee quality, and (3) state-level hearings and process may actually increase the leverage of pressure groups. State-level adoptions even when they are carefully conducted, create opportunities for angry individuals and emotional interest groups flying the flags of "inclusion" and "multiple perspectives" to challenge honest history.

The rapid consolidation of commercial media transformed textbook publishing during the 1990s. Today's national field of four major social studies textbook publishers compares with a dozen or more major history textbook makers twenty years ago. During the last decade, formerly independent education publishing houses have disappeared or become brand names inside large companies: these familiar names include Macmillan, Merrill, Glencoe (imprints of McGraw-Hill); Prentice Hall, Silver Burdett, Ginn, Scott Foresman, Addison Wesley, Longman (imprints of

Pearson); D.C. Heath and McDougal Littell (imprints of Houghton Mifflin).[6] The smaller publishing pool means fewer titles in each subject area. Weaker -- not in terms of quality, but in earnings -- textbooks and programs must be phased out and dropped from the list. The Association of American Publishers school division and its lobbyists in Washington,[7] Sacramento, Austin, and Tallahassee ritually complain that less than five percent of the nation's annual educational dollars are spent on instructional materials. *What the Association of American Publishers does not acknowledge is that better history textbooks could be at once less expensive and more instructionally sound.*

Publishers know that "design values" -- the look, the feel, the format of the textbook -- count for much more than actual content: abundant color photographs, glossy drawings, and complicated typography are what drive up the cost of textbook printing. Multimedia -- computer software, CD-ROMs, audiocassettes, videotapes and videodisks, often given away as sales inducements to technology-hungry educators -- also add to high retail prices for textbooks as publishers recoup their selling costs.

Multimedia raise new and profound structural questions for publishers. Improved history books could be had by educators for half the price, were the conventions of social studies publishing different.[8] Mass-market educational publishers cannot afford to have deep convictions about what their books contain, how "hard" they are, or even if they are "literary."[9] Some argue that instructional materials are a reflection, not a cause, of America's educational difficulties. Indeed, if curriculum specialists and state boards cannot see the evident faults of the latest generation of history textbooks, the problem does not lie exclusively with educational publishers.

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[6] In 1988, Pearson, a British conglomerate, became the first foreign company to make a direct acquisition of an American school publishing house when it bought Addison Wesley. Pearson bought Scott Foresman from HarperCollins in 1997. In 1998 Pearson took over the Viacom (Simon and Schuster) educational lines, including Silver Burdett, Ginn, and Prentice Hall, becoming the nation's and world's largest educational publisher. What "el-hi" imprints will remain is unclear. Pearson appears to be folding Silver Burdett and Ginn. McGraw-Hill now controls an estimated 60 percent of elementary social studies publishing. Pearson's aggressive entry into school publishing creates a second giant. Harcourt General and Houghton Mifflin are important but second-tier social studies publishers. Tribune/West's recent entry into history from its social studies base in psychology is limited but significant. Scholastic does not have a social studies line.

[7] The President and CEO of the Association of American Publishers is former Colorado congresswoman Patricia Schroeder.

[8] Isolated but well-constructed supplementary and "niche market" instructional materials available to teachers and students outside the educational mass market prove this point. An example is E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s Core Knowledge series published by Doubleday.

[9] Or even that they are printed. Association of American Publishers school division vice president Richard Blake, reflecting on the future of printed textbooks and CD-ROM disks, said to *Education Week* in 1997, "Our people can go either way."

4. Findings: New History Textbooks

In 1999 California adopted fifth- and eighth-grade United States history textbooks submitted by McGraw-Hill, Pearson, Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt General, Oxford, and other big publishing companies. Though these textbooks are nominal competitors, most tend to see the world and nation in a common light. The Oxford *History of US* series aside, these textbooks look and read about the same at each grade level, which is not surprising given the market-driven textbook production process described above. Secondary-level United States history textbooks exhibit greater variations in quality than do elementary-level programs. Still, at all grade levels the teacher or curriculum specialist looking for instructional materials will find sameness, not choice.[10]

The most troubling writing and content are to be found among leading elementary-level textbooks.

The seven-volume McGraw-Hill program called *Adventures in Time and Place* includes *A New Nation*, a history of the United States for fifth graders. This particular book commands a huge audience among the nation's teachers and students. On account of its popularity and market share, *A New Nation* comes as close as any textbook imaginable to being a national primer and operating curriculum -- a uniquely important one since as a rule these are the first lessons about the country's past that millions of children across the country encounter each year. Ten-year-olds will thus read a section entitled "The Southeast":

> Big things sometimes start out small. In northern Minnesota, a stream so narrow you can almost jump across it flows out of Lake Itasca. As the stream flows south, it gets much bigger. This is the mighty **Mississippi River**.
>
> Native Americans who speak Algonkian (al GAHNG kee un) call it "big water" and "great river." It also is known as "the father of waters." Find the Mississippi River on the map on this page. People in the Southeast farm the rich lands along the Mississippi. Barges carry goods south to ports in New Orleans or north to cities such as Memphis and St. Louis. The Mississippi River is both beautiful and valuable.

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[10] Recent criticism of content and style ranges from Robert Lerner, Althea K. Nagai, and Stanley Rothman, *Molding the Good Citizen*, Praeger, 1995, to Alexander Stille, "The Shame of the Textbooks," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. XLV, no. 10, June 11, 1998. Social studies is a contentious field. One critical wing holds that history textbooks are inadequate and boring. But this view goes on to claim that history textbooks cover up American racism, are ethnocentric, or represent propaganda to whitewash the nation's political and economic record. This view is fully expressed by James W. Loewen in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, New Press, 1995. For educators who take such a view, the changes that revisionism and the diversity movement are seeking are long overdue corrections, changes that should be celebrated rather than adjusted.

A large photograph of a singing black man holding a microphone is superimposed on another photograph of barges on the Mississippi River. The illustration totally overwhelms this printed passage. The caption reads: "The Mississippi River forms the western border of the state of Mississippi, birthplace of Charley Pride and other country music singers." Why not William Faulkner or Eudora Welty? Why not the exploits of Hernando de Soto? Charley Pride's race is one reason for his prominence, but more important, perhaps, this is the same editorial impulse that features Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley in up-to-date social studies textbooks. To make space, textbooks exclude such majestic figures as the explorers, statesmen, and inventors who set the course of the nation. They marginalize constitutional and economic history. They mix high culture and low, apparently indifferent to any gray scale of value. Popular culture has a place in history, of course, and can help bring it to life, as shown by Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday*. The problem lies in the meretricious use of popular heroes and celebrities to give textbooks appeal and glamour, some "edge." In doing so, time and again, textbooks end up cheapening and trivializing the past. They forgo what is significant, breaking the chain of historical consequence that illuminates the past and its connections to the present.

Champions of standard textbooks can point to textbook passages that are solid, interesting, and accurate, for example, when they cover applied technology. Transportation and engineering triumphs are undoubtedly significant in terms of economic history and national expansion. They are vivid technical achievements that make few demands on "cultural sensitivity." Thus McGraw-Hill's *A New Nation*, a textbook that fails on account of its overaccommodation to the diversity movement, states with clarity and even verve, about the Erie Canal:

> Traveling by river was not always easy. However, because river travel was cheap, canoes, flat-bottomed boats, and even log rafts carried many goods and passengers down the country's rivers. Going upstream, against the current, was much harder. The steam engine solved this problem. . . .
>
> In a ceremony on July 4th, 1817, [DeWitt] Clinton broke ground on the **Erie Canal**. Local farmers were hired to dig, but there weren't enough of them. So European immigrants were hired, too.
>
> Lake Erie is 565 feet higher than the Hudson River. To solve this problem, the workers built canal **locks**. A canal lock is like a water elevator that moves boats up and down. . . .
>
> In 1825, after eight years of hard work, the Erie Canal was finally finished. Cannons roared and people cheered as Clinton sailed into New York Harbor from Lake Erie. "They have built the longest canal in the world in the least time, with the least experience, for the least money, and to the greatest public benefit," reported one newspaper in Buffalo, New York.
>
> Before the canal was built, shipping goods between Buffalo and New York City took 20 days and cost $100 a ton. The Erie Canal brought the price down to $10 a ton and cut travel time to eight days. This helped increase trade between the East and the West.

But sharp writing is an exception to the rule. The maverick ten-volume American history series some two-thousand pages in length, written by Joy Hakim and published by Oxford University Press, is called *History of US*. These books, originally designed for elementary schools and libraries, are a hybrid: they blur the line between trade and educational publishing, social studies and language arts, and elementary and middle-grade instruction. Because of the unwieldy size, teachers select a limited number of the volumes, often as a supplement to a textbook. The series provides an appealing alternative for educators who reject standard social studies programs and who endorse story-based history for younger students.

The Oxford series succeeds as narrative history. It is text-centered. It is commendable in its simplicity and muted design. The story has energy and brings history to life, capturing the reader's interest, in contrast to the dead style of standard textbooks. The writing is plummy. Some readers find the style florid in places, marred by rapid changes in tense and person. The story line can be idiosyncratic. But the volumes have a strong voice and episodic richness that set them apart from conventional textbook fare. Whether dealing with Thomas Edison or Jim Crow, the books tell the tale of the nation's past in a manner different from standard textbooks, one with so many teaching advantages that the series points history textbook reform in the right direction.

The eighth-grade United States history textbooks that California adopted in 1999[11] prefigure publishers' submissions to the Texas United States history textbook adoption, now that the eighth-grade and eleventh-grade history textbook markets have blurred. Publishers produce books designed to serve teachers and students at two grade levels. In the next few years Texas high schools -- as well as high schools across the nation -- will probably adopt versions of these easy-reader textbooks for general use.

The most ambitious of these United States history textbooks is Glencoe's *American Journey*. The historian Walter A. McDougall acknowledges the book's merits: "This text will not misinform or twist students' minds, and may in fact expand their skills in many respects. Accurate, nothing inflammatory. The prestigious and uncontroversial 'authors,' Appleby, Brinkley, and

[11] Textbooks adopted by California in 1999 include: Glencoe's *American Journey*; Holt's *Call to Freedom*; *The American Nation*; Herman J. Viola's *Why We Remember*, a textbook that has had the misfortune of appearing under three different imprints, Scott Foresman, Addison Wesley, and Prentice Hall, during and since the California adoption; and Oxford's *History of US* series, a narrative series originally constructed for fifth-grade use. A popular eighth-grade textbook, McDougall Littell's *America's Past and Promise* was not submitted on account of conflict with the Houghton Mifflin program, but it cannot be said to be more distinguished in content or style than the competition. California accommodated all major publishers and adopted all major offerings. Publishers are demanding access to increasing public funds for instructional materials, noted above. It is assumed that Sacramento-based publishers representatives exerted great pressure on the state to be non-selective and open.

McPherson, are designed to raise the 'comfort level' of state and local officials anxious to avoid criticism or contention. The central political narrative of the founding and evolution of the political institutions of the United States is present here, and the text of the Constitution reproduced. Foreign policy and wars are decently treated, as are technology and business. The book makes an effort to expand the student's general skills, including vocabulary, geography, names and dates. The text includes extensive selections from primary documents, portraits and capsule biographies of all the presidents, an atlas and gazetteer, and other reference aids."

But the chapters are surprisingly brief, once all the study aids are discounted, McDougall notes. "They are themselves divided into numerous subheads, briefer still, which are comprised in turn of even briefer paragraphs and short declarative sentences. Consider this passage: 'Thomas Edison invented moving pictures in the 1880s. The movies soon became enormously popular. Some theaters, called nickelodeons, charged 5 cents to see short films.' A feature called Critical Thinking Skills amounts to no more than five short boxes on Understanding Cause and Effect, Distinguishing Fact from Opinion, Making Comparisons, Recognizing Bias, and Identifying the Main Idea. Some of these are pitched very low. Consider the page on Recognizing Bias: 'Cats make better pets than dogs. If you say this -- without ever having owned a dog -- then you are stating a bias.'"

While finding *American Journey* a satisfactory textbook on several counts, McDougall wondered over the text's failure to explain why things were as they were. Thus, "Colonial legislatures gave some people a voice in government. Only white men who owned property had the right to vote." Why? Was that normal at the time? Or unusual? Nothing is said. Likewise with the Enlightenment, which receives a mere ten lines, with no explanation of its various intellectual strains and their implications. Instead, we only learn that "some religious leaders feared independent thinking," as if much of the Enlightenment itself was not inspired by, or connected to, religious thinking. Likewise with Manifest Destiny. "Like many Americans, Polk saw California and New Mexico as rightfully belonging to the United States." Why? The many ideas behind Manifest Destiny are never explained. Likewise the Mormons: "In 1857 war almost broke out between the Mormons and the United States Army." Why? "The law treated women like children," the book says. How? In what ways? Again, why? These unexplained passages, McDougall concludes, are likely to result in student mystification and the sense that *American Journey* is stacking the identity-politics deck.

The United States history textbooks that California has adopted, including *American Journey*, stand in marked contrast to John A. Garraty's *The Story of America*, which California

approved in 1990 for able eighth graders, and which Texas adopted for general eleventh-grade use two years later. The core text on a random full page of the 1990 textbook runs some 500 words. In the 1998 textbook, an equivalent page has shrunk to 320 words. The typeface has been much enlarged and the core text shares the page with three subordinate information, review and activity boxes.

The Story of America was arguably the most versatile and literate textbook for secondary-level students to appear on the market in the 1990s. But *The Story of America* was not even submitted to California or Florida in recent years. It appears to be gradually moving toward the backlist and oblivion. The publisher, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, the secondary school imprint at Harcourt Brace, instead submitted a newly developed book by Sterling Stuckey and Linda Salvucci called *Call to Freedom*, designed to compete with *American Journey* and extremely similar to it in pitch, organization, and design.

California instructor Robert Hagopian notes that practically speaking, *Call to Freedom*, with its year 2000 copyright, has built-in advantages over *The Story of America*, which was published in 1991. Students and teachers can leaf to the back of the newer text and see President Clinton's picture, read a bit about the 1994 Congressional elections, the Republicans' Contract with America, NAFTA, and the Earth Summit. That curriculum specialists insist on up-to-the-minute history is part of the problem. In textbook after textbook, *Call to Freedom* included, as history moves toward current events, textbooks fall prey to "mentioning," the practice of briefly noting events, people and trends to provide "coverage" and "breadth." The resulting passages lack insight, viewpoint, context, and detail.

Page by page and from cover to cover, *Call to Freedom* has a strikingly different look from *The Story of America*. Like other eighth-grade history textbooks adopted by California, *Call to Freedom* is marching to many different drummers, trying to jump on as many different kinds of instructional methodology bandwagons as it can. Something for everybody. *Call to Freedom* breaks up the core text in unprecedented ways. Focus boxes, some of them running as much as six consecutive pages, deal with such matters as "Reading Pie Graphs," "Geography Skills," "Linking Past and Present," "Across the Curriculum," "Science and Technology," "Cultural Diversity," "Skills Workshop," and "Building Your Portfolio." Lucidity and coherence disappear in a maze of exercises and learning activities, reviewer Hagopian notes.

What text remains in *Call to Freedom* is broken up much more frequently than it is in *The Story of America*. Admittedly, each section of *Call to Freedom* makes some degree of sense. Each

conveys some amount of information. Worse eighth-grade United States history textbooks exist, notably Prentice Hall's *The American Nation*, authored by James West Davidson et al., which is reputedly the nation's largest selling eighth-grade United States history textbook. But *Call to Freedom* moves nervously from topic to topic, each marked with a heading (a gold star, red-lettered heading). Reading from section to section or division to division, one has the overwhelming sense of reading about a series of separate topics. A teacher may be aware of the topics' historical and chronological connections, Hagopian concludes. But will an eighth grader sent home with a reading assignment possess sufficient contextual awareness to read between the lines and make mental jumps from topic to topic?

Of six secondary-level United States history textbooks adopted in Florida in 1998, the state listed one "traditional" textbook, Daniel Boorstin's *History of the United States*, a Prentice Hall book recommended repeatedly by the American Textbook Council and other reviewers since the 1980s, a book now in its sixth edition but overshadowed by the popular, newer Prentice Hall offering, *Pathways to the Present*. This latter volume is important because it has been very successful since its introduction before 1997. It is generally well regarded by able high school history teachers. Even its critics concede that in content *Pathways to the Present* outpaces textbook rivals such as Paul Boyer's *The American Nation* and Matthew Downey et al.'s *In the Course of Human Events*.[12]

Pathways to the Present covers political history, the American Revolution, the Civil War, the New Deal, and religion with some detail and lucidity. Still, several reviewers note that *Pathways to the Present* repeatedly and openly panders to groups such as women, blacks, and Native Americans. Like other high school history textbooks, the book comes alive when it encounters race and group-based oppression, framing the present in a "Continuing Social Revolution" covering the period from 1960 to 1975. Nor does it understand the gravity of the Cold War and Soviet world challenge after 1945.

Pathways to the Present does not differ much from another new and very popular high school history textbook, McDougal Littell's *The Americans*, has many similarities to *Pathways to the Present*. It is a makeover of the old Winthrop D. Jordan edition overseen by the radical anthropologist J. Jorge Klor de Alva. *The Americans*'s contributors include such respected

[12] See Gilbert T. Sewall, "Triumph of Textbook Trendiness," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 1994, a review of Paul Boyer's *Todd and Curti's The American Nation*; Walter A. McDougall, "The First Fruits of the History Standards," *Footnotes*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, May 1997, a review of Matthew Downey et al., *In the Course of Human Events*.

historians as Joseph Kett and Jack Rakove; Miriam Greenblatt is a central staff writer. The book advertises a special Multicultural Advisory Board. As with other leading history textbooks, multiculturalism is the interpretive armature of the volume. In many places *The Americans* incorporates fresh scholarship and topical content. It is sophisticated revisionism.

The nation's history during the last seventy-five years, which takes up over forty percent of *The Americans*, is the most open to criticism. The Twenties, for example, features the history of Route 66 and flagpole sitting; Al Capone, Aimee Semple McPherson, and George Gershwin. One section on the Harlem Renaissance features Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Robeson, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Bessie Smith. Another showcases the Twenties Woman. But Andrew Mellon and Herbert Hoover, isolationism and geopolitics, revolutions in communications and electricity, medicine and transportation, speculation in real estate and securities, the Crash of 1929 -- all are shortchanged in the textbook.

In postwar America, *The Americans* stresses the emergence of the teenager, the other America, the struggle for black freedom. As in other United States history textbooks, "the fight for rights continues." As is customary in the new generation of textbooks, the book dwells on migrant workers, feminists, Woodstock, and other stock revisionist icons. Nearly missing is the Cold War, which in a headline quotation is likened to two scorpions in a bottle by the persecuted scientist Robert J. Oppenheimer. The subject is dispensed with in less than thirty pages, a good part of which is devoted to the Cold War at home and the McCarthy "witch hunt." Clichés abound about the so-called Organization Man and suburban conformity. The book features "smell-o-vision" and "three-dimensional" movies, the stuff of legend, meaningless to the 1950s, except as what Daniel Boorstin long ago called pseudo-events.

From *Gone With The Wind* to the popularity of science fiction in the 1950s, media receive a huge amount of attention. According to *The Americans*, "Television in the 1950s portrayed an idealized white America. For the most part, it omitted references to poverty, diversity, and contemporary conflicts, such as the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement against racial discrimination."

How wrong, given the fact that television news brought the nation Little Rock and the first stirrings of the civil rights movement. This statement appears on the same page that features a luscious photograph of wildcatter Jett Rink (James Dean) in the 1956 movie *Giant*, the panoramic story of class conflict and social justice set against the Texas oil industry from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Prentice Hall's *World History: Connections to Today* is yet another important high school textbook, first, because it is the successor volume to Burton F. Beers's *Patterns of Civilization*, widely regarded the best World history textbook of its era. Published in 1983, the Beers book was available in later editions until 1996. Second, some capable teachers contend that *World History: Connections to Today* is the best high school World history textbook currently available to them.

The book makes true to its title, lapsing into presentism and the most banal of comparisons between then and now. In *Connections to Today*, students link "The Hero" past and present by comparing Odysseus with Indiana Jones; "Hairstyles" in ancient Rome with the Beehive; "Going Shopping" in Muslim Baghdad and an indoor suburban mall. But this is only one unsatisfactory aspect of the book, according to historian Paul Gagnon of Boston University.

Gagnon laments the passing of the Beers book and the larger, lesser product that has replaced it: "In contrast to Professor Beers' *World History: Patterns of Civilization*, which was only 800 pages, with its limited features and whole pages of clean, well-spaced print, the best text of its period, a book to be read, respecting the minds of students and the competence of teachers, the new book imagines an impatient, study-allergic, trivia-soaked audience unable to focus for more than an instant, teachers so weak in both history and pedagogy that they need a never-ending flood of indiscriminate hints and hooks, ranging from the marginally useful to the fatuous." *World History: Connections to Today* is divided into eight units containing thirty-seven chapters which in turn contain 162 sections. The intent of this product: to capture markets by giving something to all teachers of whatever pedagogical enthusiasm and all students at whatever level of ability. Quite apart from the lapsed historical narrative, a deluge of boxes, sidebars, questions, exercises, analyses, chores for "research" and writing, and sundry "activities" is overwhelming, Gagnon notes. "The average page resembles a garish and over-crowded website," he declares.

Eight two-page items are called You Decide: Exploring Global Issues, one at the end of each unit. Thirty-seven half-pages called Parallels through Time, one in each chapter, and thirty-seven vignettes called Up Close, supposedly offer in-depth treatments of people and events. Each of the thirty-seven chapters close with two pages including Skills for Success and questions/activities under Critical Thinking; Analyzing Primary Sources; For Your Portfolio (writing assignments); Analyzing Tables; Internet Activity. There are thirty-seven Art History exercises and eight excerpts from World Literature. There are small Global Connection boxes in each chapter and similar boxes for Issues of the Day. There are 162 end-of-section reviews, each with questions that supposedly require Critical Thinking and an Activity, which by itself would take a full day of classwork.

For schools wanting "theme-centered" social studies, the introduction offers the Big Picture: Focus on Themes, with a page for each of nine themes, mildly revised from the National Council for Social Studies standards: Continuity and Change; Geography and History; Political and Social Systems; Religious and Value Systems; Economics and Technology; Diversity; Impact of the Individual; Global Interaction; Art and Literature. Each theme has a start-up Activity: "Interview a parent or any other older-acquaintance" to find three changes in the last twenty-five years; for Political and Social Systems, "Draw a political cartoon." The "theme" notion is elaborated under most of hundreds of photos, by questions ostensibly related to each theme, but often pulling students away from the accompanying narrative. So, under a photo of a mummified Egyptian cat, we find the bold-faced theme "Continuity and Change" and a question: "Can you think of any interesting beliefs that some people have about cats today?"

Do textbook buyers want "issues-oriented" courses? *World History: Connections to Today* includes thirty-seven boxes called "Issues for Today." Some appear aimed at fifth graders: "Farming technology transformed the lives of Neolithic people. How does technology change the way that people meet their basic need for food?" Others ask questions for which the text could provide answers but fails to, such as in the accompanying chapter on the Russian Revolution: "Why is it often difficult to establish democracy in a country without a tradition of democratic government?" Still others ask questions that could be answered only in the most abstract, wishful terms or in detailed case studies in depth: "When should the world community intercede in local conflicts to promote peace?"

Gagnon concludes that some of *World History: Connections to Today*'s exercises actually impede student understanding of history, politics, economics, and society, or they encourage students to think they understand what they cannot possibly understand from the material in front of them. The exercises titled "You Decide" provide six or seven one-sentence comments uttered from ancient to modern times, pulled out of context, on "global issues."

One example: "Is War Ever Justified?" Students are to answer questions on observations about war from the ancient Chinese warrior Sun Tzu, the Aztecs, Catherine the Great, Jose Marti, Gandhi, and a member of Another Mother Against War, followed by an Activity in which they "investigate" other points of view, finally expressing the viewpoint they "agree with most" in their own ways, which may be "an essay, a cartoon, a poem, a drawing or painting, a song, a skit, a video, or some other way." Elsewhere, students are supposed to follow the same steps to "decide" such issues as "Is Technology a Blessing or Curse?" and "Does Diversity Strength or Weaken a Society?"

World History: Connections to Today is weakest on ideas, Gagnon notes, particularly religious and political ideas, and on the political history needed to explain so many turning-points in the human struggle for peace, justice, and limited government. Greek political ideas are barely skimmed. Aristotle's plea for reason and moderation is not linked to politics, nor to Greek classicism. The ideas of Judaism and Christianity get much less space than those of Buddhism and Islam, barely a page on Judaism and twenty-five lines on Jesus's "message." This giant text finds room for only four of the Ten Commandments. Missing is the Judaic-Christian principle of direct individual responsibility to God, at the root of Western ideas of universal human equality and the need for freedom to make moral choices. Missing is belief in the amelioration of human life and the believer's duty to work for it. The sacred texts of other religions are described, but not the content of the Gospels, except for six lines from the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus's remark, out of context: "If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one, too."

In casting recent history, the book fails repeatedly. Particularly disturbing is the iconic treatment of controversial figures such as Nobel Prize-winning Guatemalan political activist Rigoberta Menchu and Brazilian eco-martyr Chico Mendes, its brief and murky mention of genocide in Rwanda, and its failure to capture the geopolitical significance of the Soviet Union's fall in 1989.

Given these and many other lapses in pedagogy and content, educators should consider another World history textbook that is strong by comparison: Glencoe's *World History: The Human Experience*, a book that evolves surprisingly from the abysmal classic, *Global Insights*. This World history may fail in spots, such as the role of women in Islamic culture. After all, the Council for Islamic Education had a hand in its production. But overall the book is cleanly designed and rich in information. The contributions of the National Geographic Society do enrich the book. From Classical Antiquity to the French Revolution, Confucianism to the emergence of modern Japan, *World History: The Human Experience* reflects generic textbook problems, notably "mentioning" and overcompression, but it stands above the confused and overstuffed volumes typical in World history textbooks today.

Diversity Resplendent

The problem is the new generation of mass-market history textbooks keeps pace in rewriting to meet the thematic demands of multicultural educators. The effort on the part of mainstream publishers to accommodate these demands is not new. More than a decade ago, Houghton Mifflin's fifth-grade history textbook, *America Will Be*, came under attack as "culture-

bound," even though, for example, it had dropped Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold, Betsy Ross, and John Paul Jones as iconic figures in the drama of the Revolutionary War. Replacements included Crispus Attucks, Abigail Adams, and Benjamin Banneker. The final chapter, "Keeping America's Promise" featured Chief Joseph, Helen Keller, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Susan B. Anthony. It was devoted to "understanding how Americans make the dream of freedom and equality come true."

But this did not slake the revisionist appetite in California, or demands in other states, including Georgia, which rejected the 1990 edition of the widely respected Holt, Rinehart and Winston textbook, *Triumph of the American Nation*, by Paul Todd and Merle Curti, mainly for being out of step with multiculturalism.

What is the perfect balance, the ultimate equilibrium? It is worth aspiring to a happy medium where the Founders and Great Men receive due credit for their accomplishments, leaving room to acknowledge these minorities' contributions, even when those contributions throw unfavorable light on the Great Men. But the diversity movement ascendant during the 1990s sometimes gives the impression of having greater ambitions, which include civic re-education according to progressive principles of social justice. Multiculturalism gives every indication of seeking to alter the basic way in which children see the past.

Historians C. Vann Woodward and Arnaldo Momigliano remarked early on the origins and ends of revisionism: Woodward examined revisionism's propensity to turn American myths of innocence upside down; Momigliano puzzled over the stitching of history to ideology and causes. As Clifford Orwin has noted more recently, what came to be known as multiculturalism in the 1990s was part of a disturbing, broader cultural break with the liberal ideal of the last fifty years, introducing (or reintroducing) race as a foundation of civic and cultural identity. United States history became a captive of identity politics and historians on the make. The time had come to redistribute the nation's historical capital, historian Gary B. Nash of UCLA said in 1992, soon before the publication of national history standards, of which he was the chief architect. This was a view shared ardently by many senior historians and the American Historical Association leadership.[13]

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[13] C. Vann Woodward, "The Fall of the American Adam," *Bulletin* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, November 1981, reprinted in *The Future of the Past*, Oxford, 1989; Arnaldo Momigliano, "History in an Age of Ideologies," *The American Scholar*, vol. 51, no. 3, Autumn 1982; Clifford Orwin, "Pericles *and* 'Big Bill' Thompson, *The National Interest*, no. 55, Spring 1999; Gary B. Nash, commenting on a paper to the Working Group on Multicultural Education gathered under the auspices of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, University of Maryland, in 1991 and 1992.

National history standards developed in 1993 and 1994 provided outlines and thematic cues for social studies publishers involved in textbook content revision. These standards ratified historical content and themes that social studies editors had been incorporating into textbooks for longer than a decade, changes often being made under activist pressure. But content makeovers had occurred unbeknownst to most people except textbook publishers, curriculum specialists, and political activists (which is the main reason they were greeted with such public alarm and condemnation in the Senate in 1995). The historian Gordon S. Wood of Brown University said of these history wars of the early and middle nineties: "So what might seem to be a petty academic debate about the nature of historical writing in fact has momentous implications for the kind of nation that we Americans want to be."[14]

Content trends of the last five years originate in editorial initiatives dating from the 1980s. Gary B. Nash's *American Odyssey*, a high-school textbook adopted by Texas in 1992, was an early example of partisan teaching materials coming into United States history and the classroom. With the appearance of the 1994 edition of *Todd and Curti's The American Nation*,[15] a structural makeover of the nation's largest-selling high-school history textbook overseen by Paul Boyer, a politically engaged historian at the University of Wisconsin, high-school history textbooks started to turn sharply to the historiographic left.

Todd and Curti's The American Nation was a bellwether. Not only did *Todd and Curti's The American Nation* completely redo American history in line with modish subject matter and interpretations. It cut the text and tarted up the package, making the new edition trendy and dumbed-down at once. Boyer's name on the cover of the latest edition confirms that the content of the book bears no common authorship whatever with the former Todd and Curti books, from *The Rise of the American Nation* (1961) to *Triumph of the American Nation* (1990).

In preparing new social studies materials for all grade levels, editors have moved diversity lessons to front and center, at risk to accuracy and student interest. These changes are not merely a matter of degree or imbalance, a pendulum that has swung a little too far. In some textbooks -- McGraw-Hill's *A New Nation* at the elementary level or both Holt, Rinehart and Prentice Hall's *The American Nation* at the secondary level, for example -- the distortions are gross and systematic.

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[14] Gordon S. Wood, "The Losable Past," *The New Republic*, November 7, 1994.

[15] The names of the textbook's former authors were retained as a selling point in the 1994 edition, written by Paul Boyer. In the current edition, the names of Paul Todd and Merle Curti have been removed. Two identically named textbooks, *The American Nation*, one authored by Paul Boyer and the other by James West Davidson, now exist, the first published by Holt, Rinehart and the second by Prentice Hall.

The old master narratives in yesteryear's textbooks -- faith in progress and patriotic pride -- have vanished, too rosy and innocent in view. What has replaced them is too often a nation that has repeatedly fallen short of its ideals, led by a patriarchy that deserves censure for its past treatment of female, non-white, and Native Americans, for trade in black human labor, and for its exploitation of the wilderness landscape and of immigrants. Young readers will encounter minority heroism and suffering. They may learn about a nation's shameful past, learning about events in such a way as to undercut civic confidence and trust. They may hear lurid tales of Western rapacity, genocide and cruelty. They may learn to despise American planters, frontiersmen, intellectuals, and businessmen. They may conclude, with the Middle Passage, that the nation's record is indelibly tainted from the start.

The new history textbooks are helping to erase -- if not national memory -- then juvenile appreciation of the nation's achievements. Many of them are assaulting Western civilization's integrity, record, and character. They are also propagating a strange new master narrative involving feminism and civil rights. Injustices begin long ago and far away. In Houghton Mifflin's *To See a World*, a World history textbook designed for sixth- to eighth-grade use, children read:

> Unlike the Renaissance man, the Renaissance woman was not encouraged to develop her abilities. One male writer [Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1528] gave Renaissance women this advice:
>
> "It does not befit [suit] women to handle weapons, to ride, to play tennis, to wrestle, and to do many other things that befit men. . ."
>
> Some Renaissance women ignored this advice. Some became writers or artists. Others became skilled workers or shop owners. A few held political power.

In this chapter on the Renaissance, children meet Isabella D'Este and Christine de Pizan, who together merit about the same amount of space in the book as Nicolaus Copernicus. As inclusion takes place, of course, editors must renounce older historical figures and subjects. The history of science in general does not fare well in the makeover. Galileo, for example, is simply absent. In *To See a World*, coverage of European history has been radically cut, supplanted by African, Caribbean, and Latin American studies. The 700-page book wraps up the period from the so-called Columbian Exchange to the Industrial Revolution in six pages. Ancient Rome, Greece, and Early Christianity together merit a mere thirty pages. Twentieth-century Europe, including Russia and the Soviet Union to the end of the Cold War, is given a total of twenty pages. In *To See a World* the Enlightenment is missing entirely. So what, an educator might say. Sixth and seventh graders may not be ready for Voltaire or Rousseau. But there is no mention of the French Revolution, the United States Constitution, or the liberal tradition of the nineteenth century either.

The United States is reinvented as a "land of diversity" and "a nation of many peoples." What remains solely of America's civic being is the immigrant experience, and in keeping with its view of the American past, the book stresses hardships late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migrants faced in a hard-hearted land. In *To See a World*'s round-up chapter on North America, entitled "For the Good of All," the American vision is vested in the African American "freedom struggles" that "helped open the door for all minorities and women." The chapter includes a special section on identifying gender stereotypes -- ridiculous or evil, you decide -- and education's value, presumably, in breaking these stereotypes.

Why do teachers and students encounter these gross invasions on truth? Why do publishers permit them?

Educational publishers are no longer confident about how to represent the nation, its civic ideals, or the world. They are not interested in deciding how. They'll leave content to standards committees and focus groups. But they are deeply interested in selling instructional materials, and after the history wars of the 1990s, they are warier than ever of content disputes.

Publishers must continue to respond to what the big adoption states want. Thus the diversity movement is transforming the content of history textbooks used in elementary and high schools, and not only in history. Group identity and proportionalism are overriding editorial issues in educational publishing today. Textbooks and other instructional materials must comply with explicit diversity regulations in California and other powerful states. When textbooks undergo state review, representation is what is being reviewed. Group-based rifts now occur across the curriculum, as demonstrated by November 1999 diversity resolutions of the National Council of Teachers of English,[16] and are divisive even in the once pacific subject of mathematics.[17]

History textbook publishing attracts a full complement of organized groups that want favorable and prominent treatment, potentially slighting or antagonizing another group. Activists have strong opinions and unyielding views. They typically feel slighted or underrepresented in

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[16] A 1999 NCTE resolution condemns standard curriculum content because it tends to "reproduce the dominant culture rather than questioning and transforming it." It asked the nation's language teachers to: "take proactive measures to enable its members, the larger profession of English language arts teachers, and community and political leaders to resist racism, sexism, homophobia, Eurocentrism, the privileging of English, economic injustice, and other forms of domination," and "proactively re-examine the relation of dominant forms of language, knowledge and culture to the democratization of expression, articulation, and access." Sandra Stotsky's *Losing Our Language*, Free Press, 1999, contains penetrating descriptions of curriculum changes in language arts and literature.

[17] See Martin Gardner, "The New Math Wars," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. XLV, no. 14, September 24, 1998.

historical scholarship. They exhibit strong group identity and feeling. They are typically unhappy with court decisions, with elections, with distribution of national income, with secular trends, or with one or another formation of social injustice. They are drawn to textbook revision, wanting to obtain some kind of reparation, advance an agenda, and act out in a public forum their quest for self-esteem and justice. Catering to vocal interest groups has an ugly and lengthening history in educational publishing. Editors must accommodate (often cravenly) the demands of lobbies whose designated representatives may make trouble, indeed who may be looking for trouble, individuals and groups that one publisher refers to as "squeaky wheels."

Textbook content reviewers and consultants are multiculturalism's gatekeepers, evaluating drafts to make certain they conform to the gatekeeper's prescribed view of the past. The Council on Islamic Education, for example, first appeared at 1990 California history textbook hearings amid disputes over the social studies curriculum. Its leaders forged links with Gary B. Nash, actively pursuing textbook projects and eager to placate or co-opt his to-the-left critics. Nash's National Center for History in the Schools embraced the Council. Several of the newest United States and World history textbooks openly acknowledge content review by Council on Islamic Education representatives.

The Council on Islamic Education's board members make no bones about their view of United States history: "American children need to know that genocide was part of the birth of this nation," wrote Ali A. Mazrui of the State University of New York at Binghamton, commenting on the New York state social studies curriculum in the early 1990s. "The Holocaust began at home." Today, the Council on Islamic Education is courted by Fortune 500 publishing companies. The official 1997 Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service roster of recognized tax-exempt organizations does not list the Council on Islamic Education. The Council's status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization is unclear, and its sources of funding are shrouded in mystery. This has not stopped high-profile publishers and editors at Houghton Mifflin, Glencoe, and Prentice Hall from consulting with the Council and its representatives.

Educators may decide for themselves whether textbooks contain accurate descriptions of Islam's historical and present-day roles in northern Africa and the Middle East, its historical attitude toward slavery and role in the slave trade from Africa to the East from the tenth century, its treatment of women, its historical animus toward Christianity and Judaism, the aims of Islamic fundamentalists, the idea of Holy War, or the advocacy of violence among fundamentalists in attaining worldly ends. They will not obtain the truth on these subjects from the Council on Islamic Education. In essence, the Council on Islamic Education is a multicultural censor and publicist,

part of the textbook terrain today, a self-constructed content gatekeeper that ensures that publishers meet a certain standard of sensitivity -- the Council on Islamic Education standard.

Reinventing History

Capturing the central theme of new elementary-level history textbooks, Harcourt Brace's fifth-grade book, *Early United States*, begins with "A Multicultural Country," a bright and cheery page with the text:

> If a huge quilt could show you what life was like in the Americas in the late 1400s, it would have hundreds of different patches. Their different colors and designs would stand for the many different Indian cultures. The United States is still a patchwork of many cultures -- American Indian, Hispanic, European, African, Asian, Pacific Island, Alaska Native, and others. The people from these many backgrounds are united by being Americans. Yet they also have kept alive their own cultural traditions. This has made the United States a multicultural country -- a country of many cultures.

This view of the nation is shallow, optimistic, and false. The list, after all, is not alphabetical. Indian cultures did not really contribute on an equal footing with European cultures. They were largely wiped out or suppressed. What is the contribution of Alaskan Natives? To put them on the same plane and equal footing with European contributions is dishonest and irresponsible.

History textbooks often present American origins as the co-mingling of three different cultures. Sometimes Christopher Columbus leads the way and the description of the so-called Columbian Exchange of people, plants, animals, and diseases between the hemispheres is nuanced, as in Prentice Hall's *Why We Remember*, which states: "Motivated by equal measures of curiosity, ambition and greed, Europeans had begun to explore beyond their known world. Portuguese explorers sailed south, making contact with first Africa, then Asia. So began the meeting of once isolated worlds."

Sometimes the meeting of three worlds is a crude multicultural centerpiece, as in Prentice Hall's more popular eighth-grade United States history textbook, *The American Nation*. The 2000 edition presents this awkward and distorted summary of events: "In the late 1400s, Europeans in search of trade sailed across the Atlantic and made contact with Native Americans. Soon, Spain and the other nations established settlements in the Americas. The Europeans also began to bring enslaved Africans there. Gradually, Native Americans, Europeans, and African peoples and cultures interacted to form a new way of life."

The United States would not be the same country if it had not been originally populated by Indians, or if blacks had not been enslaved, but for the sake of historical accuracy, these facts should not obscure the dramatic political, economic, and cultural forces unleashed by Europeans on the North American continent and in the Western Hemisphere, forces that included Cortes's butchery and John Winthrop's City on a Hill. The thematic convention of "Three Worlds Meet" allows editors to introduce non-European civilizations as foundational to American civilization and open up United States history to people of color from the beginning of the American story. But the concept that Africans and Native Americans played an equal role with other settlers in settling the North American continent is off the mark. The English language and common law, as well as religious and literary traditions, contributed to American society and culture in unique ways, without being part of a "blending."

Textbooks often contain elements of multicultural romance. In today's United States history textbooks, non-Western, pre-industrial, subsistence cultures -- Native American and West African societies in particular -- exhibit lyrical, pastoral features that compare favorably with advanced industrial culture. Accordingly, Native American cultures in woodland and plain embody ideals of community, spiritual wisdom, and environmental purity. South of the Sahara desert, according to *The American Nation*:

> Families living in small villages farmed throughout Africa. In rainforests closer to the coast, they grew yams. In the grasslands, they raised grains, including rice. In the 1400s, many farmers began clearing forest lands in order to raise more crops. During the 1500s, Africans also began to grow corn, imported from the Americas.
>
> Family relations played an important part in African life. Children owed duties not only to their parents, but to aunts, uncles, and cousins. Grandparents were entitled to special respect. Such close family ties are called a **kinship network**.
>
> African religions emphasized the importance of kinship, too. Many farmers had worked the same land as their parents and grandparents before them. Religious ceremonies honored their ancestors and the spirits of the earth. Farmers believed that by farming the land properly, they brought honor on their families.

Responding to teacher demand and state mandates, social studies editors have moved diversity agendas to front and center in many lessons, warping subjects so completely that in isolated cases they verge on propaganda. Gutted text and identity politics collide with appalling results. Children thus encounter the epic story of American nineteenth-century migrations and westward movement in McGraw-Hill's *A New Nation* in a section entitled "A Nation on the Move":

The end of the Civil War brought great changes to the United States. The changes included where people started farms, what products they made in factories, and how they transported their goods and products.

The New Railroads

In 1869, workers completed the nation's first transcontinental railroad which crossed the entire continent. It linked California with the East.

Other railroads were also built. Laying so many miles of track gave jobs to thousands of laborers. Most of them were immigrants from Ireland and China and Mexican American migrants from the West and Southwest.

The new railroads opened up huge areas of land. Thousands of African Americans traveled by rail from the South. Some went to Northern cities to work in industry, while others moved to the Middle West. In 1879, more than 20,000 African Americans started new farms in Kansas. The movement of thousands of people from a region is called an exodus -- so the African Americans who moved to Kansas were known as **exodusters**.

The railroads also brought to an end the way of life of many Native Americans. Railroads and settlers destroyed the huge herds of buffalo that had provided Plains Indians with food, shelter, clothing, and tools.

New Ways to Farm

Railroads, new plows, and windmills allowed farming to come to the Great Plains. The kind of wheat that would grow there was introduced by Russian immigrants.

Chinese immigrants brought farming skills to their new homes. In Oregon, a Chinese immigrant named Ah Bing bred the famous Bing cherry. In Florida, Lue Gim Gong bred a frost-resistant orange, starting the Florida citrus fruit industry.

In Texas and the West, raising cattle had become big business, often pushing out original ranchers and cowboys -- the Mexican American rancheros and vaqueros. Cowboys herded cattle to Abilene and Dodge City in Kansas. The cattle were carried by train to Chicago, which became the world's largest meat-packing center.

Exodusters. Lue Gim Gong. Railroads despoiling Native American culture. A push on Mexican American vaqueros. This passage is a stew of historical nonsense. It forsakes the Oregon Trail and covered wagons to California and Scandinavian immigrants founding places such as Minnesota, that is, the real story of the American West. It is new history at its very worst, a pastiche that denies fifth graders a chance to taste and learn about the greatest migration of modern times, the American peopling of the continent. Ah Bing of course is a nineteenth-century Asian, a discovery that must have made the McGraw-Hill editors dance with glee. His notice might fit in a history of farming, of the Pacific Northwest, or of ethnic contributions to the nation. The chief fault is the *disjunction*: Bing cherries vis-a-vis the transcontinental railroad, which "crossed the entire continent" and "linked California with the East." The history of the continent is admixed with fortuitous horticulture in Bing's backyard.

When children hear about African-American exodusters traveling to Kansas by rail, they get lost in a detour that has no bearing, really, on the grand achievement that was the laying of the transcontinental railroad. This kind of writing, when directed at ten-year-olds, leads to confusion and disorientation. It hinders the development of powers of concentration and focused attention -- and skills of extracting meaning from content.

Black history surely is central to the American experience. The Middle Passage is dramatic and hair-raising, involving the transcontinental transport of Africans to North and South America during a 350-year period, resulting in enslavement and death of millions. It seems amazing today that schoolbooks thirty years ago barely mentioned it. (Now some textbooks inflate best estimated mortality rates of Africans by two or three times.) Slavery does get at the heart of the nation's history from the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as it was part of the Revolution and Founding and was fundamental to the politics and regional economies in the decades leading up the Civil War. Long-standing Southern resistance to emancipation and the outcome of the war followed. The complex and rich story of African Americans is waiting to be told, for example, through slave narratives of vast interest, detail, and poignancy, such as those found in the new Library of America anthology.[18]

Instead, editors add insignificant and untrustworthy material to please race-conscious educators and African American gatekeepers who want children to learn more about African heritage than anything else in history. The nebulous and almost undocumented African history before the nineteenth century expands to giddy heights replete with great medieval trading empires and rulers of fabulous stature and wealth. In United States history textbooks today, the fourteenth-century West African king Mansa Musa has become a stock hero and opening figure. A Spanish map, says Prentice Hall's *The American Nation*, paid tribute to Mansa Musa's magnificence: 'So abundant is the gold in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land.'" *The American Nation* avers: "During his 25-year reign, Mansa Musa worked to bring peace and order to the kingdom of Mali. A visitor noted, 'There is complete and general safety throughout the land.'" *American Journey* says vaguely that Mansa Musa "was described at the time as 'the most powerful, the richest, the most fortunate, the most feared by his enemies, and the most able to do good to those around him.'" Textbooks now lavish attention on medieval African centers of learning and "universities." "Timbuktu boasted over 100 religious schools as well as a university," declares *The American Nation*, ignoring contributions to American culture originating in European intellectual centers such as London, Geneva, and Seville.

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[18] William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *Slave Narratives*, Library of America, 2000.

New historical figures such as Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable appear, bearing new claims for the American past. "The trading post Du Sable built grew to become the city of Chicago," states McGraw-Hill's *A New Nation*, when in fact Chicago is a settlement whose origins are to be found in more significant figures than Du Sable. These include Louis Jolliet and Jacques Marquette, who, in 1673, ran the route from the Great Lakes into the upper Mississippi, or civil engineer James Thompson, who gave Chicago a geographical location in 1830. Such historical deformations occur in other public celebrations: the illustration in the textbook comes from an idealized Du Sable on a United States Postal Service stamp. In *Early United States*, the Harcourt Brace fifth-grade United States history, a section "African Regiments" begins the chapter on the Civil War, followed by "Grant Leads the Union" and "Gettysburg." The chapter begins:

> Africans had fought to defend the United States since the Revolutionary War. Over the years, however, many had been kept from joining the army. By the start of the Civil War, they were not allowed to serve in the army. . . . Finally in 1862, with no end to the war in sight and fewer white soldiers joining the army, Congress agreed. More than 186,000 Africans signed up. They formed 166 regiments of artillery, cavalry, infantry, and engineers. At first African soldiers were not paid as much as white soldiers. They were given poor equipment . . .

What a mess *Early United States* makes of this subject, emphasizing discrimination and injustice, that these "African" freedom fighters were shortchanged in salary and supplies by Northern leaders, in other words, were victims of -- the Union. This passage is completely misleading, referring to black troops as "Africans." Numerous examples exist in international conflicts of countries from one nation supporting or fighting in alliance with other nations. So to say that Africans fought for the Union is to say African nations sent troops to fight for the North. Conceptually, the passage fails: the blacks who fought heroically in the Civil War were proud and honored to fight for the Union, not as conscripts but as volunteer regiments. They were probably very conscious of their status as Americans. To deny these veterans nationhood and Americanhood in the nation's bloodiest and most epic war is to patronize and segregate. Then there is the narrative cost: for example, a lost opportunity to tell the inspirational, tragic story -- celebrated in the 1989 film, *Glory* -- of Col. Robert Gould Shaw of Massachusetts and his black regiment at Fort Wagner, South Carolina.

History textbooks today cover women's history in extreme detail, putting the subject into the center of United States and World history, not because of its significance in shaping polities, economies, and cultures but because of gender politics, pure and simple. In the 1998 edition of *The American Nation*, included among the forty-five notables highlighted in United States history are Pocahontas, Mercy Otis Warren, Frances Kelsey, Abigail Adams, Narcissa Whitman,

Dorothea Dix, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Charlotte Forten, Mary Elizabeth Lease, Mother Jones, Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Liliuokulani, and Maggie Kuhn. This may be inclusion, but in McGraw-Hill's *A New Nation*, the dominant fifth-grade United States history textbook, fifth graders read from a section entitled "Women Fight for Equality":

> Women had won the right to vote, but they made little progress in the workplace. They had done "men's work" during wars, keeping the nation's factories running. They did not, however, get "men's pay."
>
> In 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, stating that women should receive equal pay for equal work. However, women were often discouraged from seeking careers. Some people felt that the most important job a woman could have was in the home. Others wanted the same freedom as men to have jobs outside the home. One leader who felt this was Betty Friedan. In 1966 she helped found the National Organization for Women, or NOW, to support women's rights.
>
> Today many women have jobs such as astronaut or firefighter that were once only held by men. Women also represent other Americans in government. In 1968 **Shirley Chisholm** became the first African American congresswoman, and in 1972, the first woman from a major party to run for President. Sandra Day O'Connor became Justice of the Supreme Court in 1981. Madeleine K. Albright became Secretary of State in 1996. California was the first state to have two women in the Senate, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

The reductive content, strident political subtext, and literary qualities contained in this passage are equally appalling. The chapter concludes with the section, "The Fight Continues": "African Americans are not the only group fighting for civil rights. Native Americans were not made citizens of the United States until 1924. In the 1960s, they continued to fight for land promised them by the United States government," the book says. Thus ten-year-olds meet Russell Means and read about the occupation of Alcatraz Island from 1969 to 1972. "Activists also briefly occupied Ellis Island and Mount Rushmore," the book explains. Young readers then encounter La Causa, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta. They are introduced to the American Indian Movement and the National Farm Workers Association. The chapter summary in entirety reads:

- Americans are guaranteed certain basic rights in the Constitution.
- Women won the right to vote in 1920. They began to enter the workforce in record numbers in the 1960s.
- In the 1950s and 1960s African Americans began to achieve equality.
- Native Americans and migrant workers continue to fight for civil rights.

The lesson ends with a what the textbook calls a Thinking Skill: *List one* cause *and one* effect *of the 1960s women's movement.*

Today's history textbooks are designed to perform a number of inspirational tasks, including reconstituting gender roles and self-esteem building. The prose among eighth- and

eleventh-grade United States history books may not be as crude as the history books encountered by fifth graders. But it remains highly inaccurate, and a portion of it is agitprop. With vocational ends in mind, Prentice Hall's *The American Nation*, 1994 edition, widely used today in eighth- and eleventh-grade classrooms across the country, describes "A Busy Life for Women":

> In New England and in other colonies, women worked at many tasks from sunrise to sunset. Although a woman had few legal rights, she worked as an equal partner with her husband to provide for her family. Women helped clear the land. They planted and harvested crops. . . . Women worked at many jobs outside the home. They were blacksmiths, tinmakers, and weavers as well as innkeepers, merchants, and barbers. They also worked as nurses, midwives, and doctors.

A few pages later, in "Education in the Colonies" the same volume examines the institution of apprenticeship:

> Girls, too, became apprentices, although they had a smaller choice of trades. A girl's parents might send her to become a cook, a needleworker, or a housemaid. However, women learned other trades from their fathers, brothers, or husbands. They worked as shoemakers, silversmiths, and butchers. Quite a few women became printers. A woman often took over her husband's business after his death.

Midwives, yes. But doctors? How many colonial women were butchers, silversmiths, or printers? How many were blacksmiths, tinmakers, barbers, or merchants? Perhaps helping their husbands to host and run taverns, or running trades inherited from deceased husbands. But some of these "facts" appear to be pure fantasy. Where is the documentary proof? What is the authority for these statements?

Prentice Hall's *The American Nation*, the 2000 edition, features Sor Juana, whose highlighted biography reads in entirety, unanchored by a date or even a century:

> Juana Ines de la Cruz was one of the most talented poets of New Spain. Because she was a girl, she was refused admission to the university in Mexico City. She entered a convent at age 16 and devoted herself to studying and writing poetry. She also wrote a spirited defense of women's right to an education. ★ **Besides women, what other people in New Spain were denied equal rights?**

This extraordinary capsule tells the reader very little about Sor Juana. In fact it frustrates the reader's desire to understand. The child-reader may perceive that Sor Juana was a poet and that she was in a convent. Then she comes across as an early advocate of woman's rights. This smacks of bogus history. The child-reader has no clue that this might be a Roman Catholic religious who wrote poems of a devotional or mystical character. Instead of looking at religious experience or a

bit of sixteenth-century poetry, the passage includes a vignette of oppression and deprivation. The text states that "she was refused admission to the university in Mexico City," when the university was a religious institution founded to educate priests and clerics. Before entering the convent, according to legend, Sor Juana asked her parents to disguise her as a boy so she could go to school. The final study question reflects such a serious and fundamental misconception of history and the history of New Spain as to doom any respect for the textbook.

5. Conclusions

History textbooks should be accurate and interesting. They should record what actually happened, and do so with some drama, conveying rich details, making an effort at objectivity, and making clear to children why a person, event, or geographical detail was of significance and importance. They should explain, not indoctrinate.

These basic ambitions are unevenly met among the nation's history textbooks. Both in writing and content, the greatest deficiencies occur at the elementary level, a judgment that should disturb anyone who believes that language arts and civic education are critical elements in primary education. New textbooks on the market confirm the warnings and trend signals that the American Textbook Council has aired in previous bulletins and briefings. Some textbook critics and social studies specialists that the Council has consulted are concerned that many teachers, even the most capable and original, have reduced expectations for history textbooks. An increasing number of them may be reprogrammed into thinking that the new format and dropped text in the new generation of history textbooks are advances in curriculum and pedagogy.

ONE. ***Gutted textbooks and the passing of close reading as a central learning activity pose profound challenges to literacy and habits of thought.***

There is no substitute for exacting language. Language provides clear definitions and concrete accounts, contrasts and parallels, cause and effect. While text should be age appropriate, the clarity and directness of language should combine with the "seamless thread" of narrative to advance understanding. Unfortunately, state and local textbook adoption procedures rarely, if ever, address matters of style and textual quality.

Many history textbooks seem to reflect lowered sights for general education, coupled to the conviction -- widely held among editors and educators -- that a snappy, scattered format with few

words and many classroom activities will alleviate student boredom with history and reading and writing. They raise basic questions about sustaining literacy and civic understanding in a democratic polity and culture. Public affairs require general and civic knowledge. They require precision of thought, especially critical thought, skills that in a democracy cannot be isolated among an opinion-making elite but must be widely dispersed, if not universal, through the population.

Pictures are not always worth a thousand words. Precision of thought depends on clear, fluent language. Effective learning demands that students have the ability to collaborate with the text and be able to grasp through language (comprehend) why an individual, event, or institution is notable. Graphics can enrich text but only if they complement or extend concepts and episodes that are centered in the text. Maps, tables, graphs and lists especially can help to illuminate historical subjects. But many illustrations and sidebars serve no such instructional purpose.

The Carnegie Corporation president Vartan Gregorian's fears for the future of language may well increase as electronic media force a revolution in information management and distribution inside and outside of schools. Electronic publishing's educational opportunities begin with its ability to narrowcast and broadcast vast amounts of useful information cheaply and efficiently. All publishers are committed to electronic distribution in the future. Web-based lessons and learning have growing teacher appeal. Some educators versed in instructional trends fear the day may come when, if information cannot be downloaded, it won't be used. High-quality data archives, lesson plans, and other instructional resources on the Web are already available to teachers and students. There are too few of them. They are not easily located, well catalogued, or carefully reviewed. The challenge for electronic publishing and teaching materials will be to achieve the standard associated with the best printed reference books and to integrate these electronic resources with traditional look-it-up library methods.

TWO. ***Editorial confusion reigns in the subject of history. Content is thinner and thinner, and what there is, increasingly deformed by identity politics and group pieties.***

Publishers cater to pressure groups for whom textbook content is an extension of a broader political or cultural cause. They make books whose content is meant to suit the sensitivities of groups and causes more interested in self-promotion than in fact, scholarly appraisal, or balance. For many educators, "inclusion" is more than a watchword. It is the thematic center of curriculum reform. At the same time these publishers wish to offend no one and nobody. Editors search

earnestly for historical figures who will obtain the perfect identity rainbow, who will provide role models for the largest number of groups, who are gatekeepers' favorites, or who fight valiantly in one way or another against the sins of the forefathers. But diversity stitched into lesson after lesson impairs the integrity of the entire product. The multicultural imagination does not result in better history or, to use the cliché, *history, warts and all*. Instead, the changes tend to give students a selective, puzzling, and fishy view of the nation and world. Blandness is the descriptive word that experts regularly apply to textbook prose. The exception: when history textbooks encounter certain kinds of injustice at the hands of Western Civilization or the American Regime. In such passages textbooks come to life. The tone may change to pleading and crusading. The Fight Continues.

Multiculturalism's universal appeal at the beginning of the 1990s lay in its pledge to broaden the nation's understanding of the past, calling attention to minority groups that had been neglected and improving the balance of old and new history. But ten years later the "triumphalism" of the old American history -- establishment of responsible government, development of a national economy, extension of democracy to blacks and women, influence in world affairs, a rising standard of living for most if not all -- seems the main casualty of the multicultural idea. As embodied in the national standards, multiculturalism emphasizes the story of outcast groups and their resistance to established order.

On account of changes in American and World history textbooks, children today may envision their country and its Anglo-European heritage not with a sense of achievement or pride but with a degree of mourning or indignation. Heroes who have long introduced children to history and the nation's past are becoming problematized: Christopher Columbus, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Sam Houston; the pioneers on the Great Plains and in California; the builders of railroads and cities. New heroes in leading textbooks -- Mansa Masu, Anne Hutchinson, Carrie Chapman Catt, Rigoberta Menchu, Chico Mendez, and Anita Hill -- serve to advance a civic agenda that highlights and ennobles people of color, peace advocates, anti-colonialists, environmentalists, and wronged women. Victimhood carries with it special privilege and status. In the new generation of United States history textbooks, Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay, Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison, Gettysburg and Promontory Point do not exactly vanish, but they are not much savored either. In World history, old-time historical giants like Julius Caesar and Marcus Aurelius, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and John Calvin, Copernicus and Magellan, Voltaire and Rousseau, Napoleon, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud play supporting roles, if any. They are no longer considered central figures in general education. The result is bad history and an incomplete understanding of the origins of the nation and world today.

THREE. ***Publishers should be producing cheaper books that are more text-centered, simpler in design, and more honest in content.***

A growing number of educators and parents recognize the benefits of history textbooks that are fluent and detailed, that students can read and outline, that do not "jump around." They observe the scattered ambitions and stripped down prose that make history textbooks depressing to read. They reject the multifoliate editorial apparatus that renders these books unreadable and unfocused. They are seeking textbooks that are compact, clear, and trustworthy. Demands for such textbooks are likely to increase. How can publishers reconcile this demand with design and editorial pressures moving in opposite directions?

General readers of all ages are evidently partial to narrative history. This large and enthusiastic public audience wants history to tell a *story*. Why should students and young people feel any different about the subject? Young people enjoy stories and events that concretize political intrigue, technical and creative achievement, benevolence and evil, love and hatred. Few history textbooks accomplish this. History is full of drama that really happened, and the epic stories behind the present stand on their own when well told and written. Biography in particular provides universals in particulars, records human anxieties and triumphs, reveals sorrows and hopes, and gives children some idea of how heroes and villains steered their own lives. Readability is the greatest virtue of the Oxford *History of US* series. Teaching materials have cerain responsibilities. History cannot be one long, captivating soap opera, and indeed, educators should see the field as the great organizing discipline by which the many strands of politics, economics, and culture cast and recast themselves in dynamic ways. These are strands with specific traits and characteristics, that move forward in chronology, that can be checked against documents and reference materials.

Students and teachers need concise, clear instructional materials and coursebooks. A growing number of concerned parents want primers that are easy-to-read and understand, that tell a story, that are compact, legible and accurate. Primary materials and other learning activities can supplement these basic coursebooks: themselves be a few hundred pages, half the weight and size of standard history textbooks; text-centered, with strong illustrations, supporting tables, graphs and maps, with minimal editorial apparatus.

Great opportunities exist for the development of new history textbooks that state and local educators will embrace on account of sharp writing, clear subject focus, and balance of sensitivities. If the cost is low enough, public schools might try to distribute or sell to students individual books to keep as their own, as is the custom in private schools and colleges.

FOUR. ***Schools and textbook adoption committees should consider the purchase of history textbooks still available with dated copyrights.***

When looking for improved history textbooks, educators and textbook committees should remember that current copyrights are no proof of quality or improved teaching materials. Educators should not rule out purchasing "backlisted" textbooks with slightly dated copyrights. Publishers often discount the textbooks that remain in stock from previous years. Educators can thus buy these books more cheaply than featured new entries that have yet to earn revenues, even though publisher's sales representatives do their utmost to convince teachers that "new is better." These books sometimes have more detailed, trustworthy narratives than new social studies offerings. A few history textbooks that sustained their past editorial content, notably Daniel Boorstin's *A History of the United States*, published by Prentice Hall, retain an appreciative audience and at least one major state adoption. John A. Garraty's *The Story of America*, by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, is still available to educators. The DiBacco et al. *History of the United States* (Houghton Mifflin) textbook, also adopted by Texas in 1992, is an estimable reference book. History textbooks in print that some critics once declared to be "dull" now seem impressive and worth reappraisal, as they retain qualities (e.g., authorial voice and narrative, clarity and simplicity) abandoned by newer textbooks. One example is Henry Drewry's *America Is*, a middle-level United States history textbook published by Glencoe, in print with relatively minor changes for twenty years but updated in the early 1990s.

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REVIEWING TEXTBOOKS: A Checklist

Textbooks are effective teaching and learning tools only when they match the reading abilities and academic reference points of the students who will use them. Since reading abilities and academic reference points vary from one classroom to another, some textbooks will be "harder" and "more complex" and other textbooks will be "simpler" and "easy to read." *What should teachers who are looking for satisfactory instructional materials do?* They should stick to clear, comprehensive textbooks that are comfortable and easy-to-use rather than relying on new books or multimedia that are designed to be "innovative" or "entertaining."

Basic Questions

Is the information accurate? Is the treatment of various groups in society fair and unbiased? Is the reading level appropriate for the students who will be using the material? Is the book written in a clear and comprehensible manner? Is the book written in a style that will be interesting and hold the student's attention? Do the review questions and other end-of-chapter exercises support the material presented in the narrative? Are pictorial and sidebar materials relevant to the subject matter? Are chronology and linkages with geography integral to the book's design?

Content

In the case of American history, reviewers should consider the way in which textbooks describe and represent national identity. To what extent and how clearly do textbooks state the development of a national consciousness? The movements that have reinforced the common civic culture in which students are growing up? The teacher or textbook committee should:

- Read several text passages and critical thinking questions in the texts they are reviewing to consider the success with which each textbook under consideration incorporates themes of ethnicity, and gender, religion.
- Ask to what extent do new themes affect the depth and interpretation of political and economic change in the subject area? Do these themes enhance or marginalize constitutional and economic history? Who is selected as heroes and for what reasons?
- Who are the new heroes? What old heroes remain, and why? Be on guard when "structural inequities" or "institutional discrimination" are the central theme in the interpretation of national character.

Examine the table of contents. What subjects are emphasized? What themes and patterns emerge? What logic guides the movement of the text? What kinds of history are stressed? In the case of American history, does the book develop the idea of a national character and civic identity? In the case of world history, does the book explain the unique impact of Western ideas and technology on global society?

Examine one unit. Is there a systematic development of ideas? Are topics treated in depth? Is the narrative lively in style and rich with experiences of people? Is there correspondence between the narrative and the illustrations, sidebars, supporting biographies, or primary source references? Is literature included or referenced? Are different types of primary sources included, either as a complete reference or in a meaningful excerpted passage?

Format

Textbook reviewers should be vigilant to seductive appearances in educational materials, since design considerations have become paramount forces in marketing and textbook "appeal." In making decisions about what books to adopt, reviewers should remember the virtues of clarity and simplicity in technical design. Pictures may provide cues for identifying words that are otherwise hard to recognize, or pictures may stimulate interest in reading a text and promote a better understanding of the information in the text. Only pictorial additions that are relevant to the reading can assist comprehension and concept development. Is the core text complemented or overshadowed by color, illustrations, subtexts, and editorial apparatus? Is the format easy or hard to scan or read?

Instructional Activities and Teacher Guidance Materials

Textual signposts and supports help direct students: tables of contents, chapter heads and subheads, indexes and glossaries, critical thinking and review questions, chapter introductions and summaries, vocabulary lists, and skill-building units. Some serve to organize the text in an orderly manner and give teachers a means of teaching, reviewing, and testing.

Read over a lesson. Compare the material intended for the student and that intended to guide the teacher. Identify the lesson goal or objective. Is it sound? Look at the way in which primary sources, maps, graphs, and tables are used to enhance the core text.

Examine the instructional activities. Do they provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in the learning process? Are they varied? Are opportunities to write provided? Can students of differing abilities find opportunities for success in learning the content? Do questions provided for students help them to analyze the information and to think critically; that is, to reflect, hypothesize, analyze, verify, synthesize? Do the activities provide for curriculum integration and correlation? Do students have the opportunity to discuss or debate ideas presented in the textbook? Do activities become more challenging as the year progresses?

Examine the teacher's edition. Is a detailed scope and sequence list for the course provided? Is there a direct relation between the teachers' and the students' materials? Are these teachers' materials more than banal marginalia? Are opportunities offered to extend or enrich the text? Are primary sources or literature a part of this extension?

Examine another lesson in the teacher's text. Are there ideas, activities, or suggested materials to engage student interest? Do the activities make sense? Are they varied? Are they appropriate for the grade level and the reading ability of students? Are varied instructional strategies suggested to meet the learning styles or ability levels of different students? Can students generate their own questions? Are extension activities suggested? Are they meaningful?

Examine evaluation and assessment materials. Are both formal and informal assessment strategies suggested? Do these strategies enable students to hypothesize, analyze, and draw conclusions about the subject matter they are studying? Do assessment strategies include student writing exercises?

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